

THE
A.P.P.E.A.L
TO
COMMON SENSE,

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APPEAL TO COMMON SENSE.

It is almost impossible to peruse a single page of English History, from the Norman Conquest to the present time, without being utterly astonished at the unaccountable patience of the people, and the intolerable duplicity, arrogance, pomposity, and tyranny of the State Priesthood. We find them rendering themselves independent of the secular power; opposing all popular instruction; and, in the reign of John, their insolence was carried so far, that they even took possession of the royal crown, and by that means deprived the people of their king for the space of four days; and suspended even the very appearance of religion, for the term of six years and four months, during which time they compelled the people to bury their dead like dogs in ditches, or pits dug in the common highways or fields.

In the 5th year of the reign of Richard II, these state priests surreptitiously obtained the insertion in the Statute Book of "An Act to commission Sheriffs to apprehend Preachers of Heresy, and their Abettors, reciting the enormities ensuing the preaching of Heresy," which act the Commons disclaimed, and in the following year petitioned the king for its repeal; the act was repealed: yet, notwithstanding, the clergy carried on their persecutions under its authority against the followers of John Wickliffe, who publicly maintained in their writings, and in their discourses from the pulpits, that all the best livings in the kingdom were given to the rich and the powerful, and that the poor zealous clergy were totally neglected and despised; and, also, that if the clergy were entitled to their tithes, the people were justified in withholding tithes, rates, &c., when the duty was not faithfully performed.

The bishops of the English church, with only one honourable exception, assisted Henry IV. in his usurpation, and in return for their zeal and fidelity in that dishonourable cause, obtained the power of burning alive such of the clergy as should be found preaching the liberal doctrines of Wickliffe; which act was speedily put into execution, by burning William Sawtree, rector of St. Osithes, London.

The next remarkable character who presents himself to our notice, is that pompous ostentatious tyrant Cardinal Wolsey, who carried his presump-

tion so far, as to have his cardinal's hat placed as part of the royal arms upon certain coins of the realm; who attempted to intimidate the free deliberations of the House of Commons by his pompous presence; and having received some slight offence from the Duke of Buckingham, he caused a charge of high treason to be preferred against him, and had him publicly executed on Tower Hill. There is an account in Baker's Chronicle, so characteristic of this silly empty tyrant, that I think I ought not to pass by without taking notice of it. When Cardinal Campejus was sent as Legate from Pope Leo to King Henry VIII., Wolsey sent a great quantity of scarlet cloth to Calais to clothe his ragged retinue; and on his approach to London caused the gentry of Kent, with the Duke of Norfolk, and many bishops, to meet him at Blackheath, in order to escort him through the city to St. Paul's: as the poor cardinal had only eight mules, loaded with necessaries, Wolsey thought that the dignity of the church would be better supported if a larger number should appear in the train, and therefore furnished him with twelve more. As the procession was advancing to St. Paul's, through Cheapside, some of Wolsey's mules by accident overthrew their carriages and coffers, the contents of which, consisting of old breeches, boots, old shoes, marrow bones, crusts of bread, &c. were scattered in all directions, to the great mirth and derision of the assembled multitude.

In 1556 Cranmer, together with eighty-four other persons, were burnt alive on account of their religion; and it is recorded that in the six years of Mary's reign five bishops, twenty-one divines, and two-hundred and seventy-seven persons, were publicly executed, to support what state parsons call christianity,—which means attending church, keeping out of conventicles, and being punctual in the payment of tithes, Easter dues, church rates, &c.

In the year 1571, a Bill for the Suppression of Simony was introduced to the House of Commons, when Mr. Snigg made some very severe remarks upon the abuses of the church; amongst others, that the patron had no worth or value in the living to which he had the power to present, but only the bare nomination;—that the patron ought neither to respect commodity, blood, affection, friendship, or any thing else, but the worth or sufficiency of the man, &c. which amounts to saying that all church property is public property, that it has been left by certain pious individuals for the benefit of the public, and the patrons are merely trustees for the public; and I maintain that if there are certain duties for these patrons or trustees to perform, there are also duties for the public, *who own this trust property*, to perform likewise; which duties are to compel all patrons to require clergymen to reside in their respective parishes, and to perform the duties themselves for which they are paid; and if the patrons will not

place in their respective parishes such individuals as the *majority of the tithe-payers* approve of, those parishioners are justified,—nay, they are called upon by their duty to God and the rights of men,—as well on their own account as that of their posterity, to refuse the payment of tithes and church rates. I will admit that if an individual will pay tithes under any or every circumstance, merely because his father or grandfather paid them before him, whether the rector who receives all, or the curate who merely receives a tenth part of the emoluments, perform the duty, he has a right to do what he will with his own; but I do maintain that it would not be wicked or improper for him to do otherwise, notwithstanding any act or acts of parliament which the parsons may have obtained, through the medium of the bishops in the House of Lords, to favour themselves at the expense of the just rights of the people; as I consider the inalienable rights of men are far above any act of parliament, which can be passed by all the lord parsons in the world.

On the 11th of March, 1640, a resolution passed the House of Commons “That for bishops, or any other clergymen whatever, to be Privy Counsellors, or in the Commission of the Peace, or to have any judicial power in the Star Chamber, or in any civil court, is a hindrance to their spiritual functions, prejudicial to the commonwealth, and fit to be taken away! and a bill was ordered for that purpose, in order to put a stop to the great

enormities which had been committed by the state priests, on the persons of such individuals as had called in question their divine right to tithes, the jurisdiction of the bishops, &c. Among the most conspicuous of these persecuted individuals, stands William Prynne, Esq. barrister at law, who, for having written a book against plays, dancing, &c, was condemned by the Star Chamber, at the instigation of Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, who, like others, sat in the House of Lords to *protect* Christianity, to stand in the pillory at Westminster and Cheapside,—to lose one ear at each place,—to pay five thousand pounds,—to suffer perpetual imprisonment, and to have his book burnt by the common hangman.

In 1641, the House of Commons took into consideration the affair of deans and chapters, when the universities of Oxford and Cambridge presented petitions in favour of those institutions, and as the Oxford petition is rather curious, on account of the *unblushing truths* it contains, I will give one or two extracts from it. After giving several reasons why those pious foundations should be preserved, it states, “ As affording a competent portion, in an ingenuous way, to many younger brothers of good parentage who devote themselves to the ministry of the gospel.” In 1641, we find the same arguments used in favour of abuses as we find in 1833, *a provision for younger sons* !! Is it not lamentable to think that the corruptions in church and state have

been preserved from time immemorial, merely as an ingenuous way to provide for genteel paupers, at the public cost. Nothing has contributed so much to degrade the character of the English aristocracy and gentry, as bringing up their families in a more expensive style than they can give them fortunes to support; and so being driven (in order to keep up gentility) to any meanness in the way of flattering their superiors, in order that those superiors may find out some '*ingenuous way*' to support the younger members of their families, at the public expense; while their entailed and frequently embarrassed estates descend to the eldest son, who, walking in the steps of his father, marries, has a large family, supports by flattery and election services some neighbouring nobleman, who contrives to repay those services some way or other at the expense of the public.

But to return to the Oxford petition, "and we become further suitors for the continuance of those pious foundations of cathedral churches with their lands and revenues, as the only means of subsistence to a multitude of officers and other ministers, who, with their families, depend upon them, and are wholly maintained by them." The above argument amounts to this, that farmers are to be tithed in order that officers may find employment, which is much the same as the landlords taxing the bread-eaters, in order that agricultural labourers may be employed. The petition proceeds, "As the chief support of many thousand families

of the laity, who enjoy fair estates from them in a free way," a very free way indeed! to hold out inducements to the holders of church lands to cultivate those lands as if they were their own, and not subject to any increase of rent; but when the lease expires, the poor tenants find that their improvements will be taken advantage of by the owners of the property, and that unless they will pay some very considerable sum for the renewal, the pious clergy will deprive them of their property, and transfer it to their *younger sons, as an ingenuous provision*,—as hath been represented to have been done by a certain pious gentleman in our days.

I have no doubt but I could write some volumes upon the enormities committed by that corporation of priests, called the Church of England, during the reigns of Charles II. and James II.; but as such a catalogue would not be interesting to the general reader, and would so much infringe upon the Book of Martyrs, and Neale's History of the Puritans, and a host of other authors, which may be seen in any library of any zealous member of the Society of Friends, or other denomination of Protestant Dissenters in England, I shall not give one instance.

During the twenty-five years of Charles's reign, persecuting acts were frequently attempted to be smuggled through the Houses of Parliament by the state priests, under the form of Money Bills, in order that dissenters might be persecuted, and

the poor profligate Charles and his ministers bear the blame. Dr. Burnett in his History of his own Times states, that “ The king was much offended at the behaviour of most of the bishops; and he took occasion to vent it at the council-board. Upon the complaints that were made of some disorders, and of some conventicles, he said, the clergy were chiefly to blame for those disorders; for if they had lived well, and had gone about their parishes, and taken pains to convince the Non-conformists, the nation might have been by that time well settled. But they thought of nothing but to get good benefices, and to keep a good table. This I read in a letter that Sir Robert Murray writ down to Scotland; and it agrees with a conversation which the king was pleased to have with myself once, when I was alone with him in his closet. While we were talking of the ill state the church was in, I was struck to hear a prince of his course of life, so much disgusted at the ambition, covetousness, and the scandals of the clergy. He said, ‘ If the clergy had done their part, it had been an easy thing to run down the Non-conformists: but,’ he added, ‘ they will do nothing, and will have me do every thing, and most of them do worse than if they did nothing.’ ”

As Dr. Burnett is so respectable an authority, being bishop of Salisbury in the reign of William III, and well acquainted with all affairs connected with the state of the priesthood in his time, and as he has written so fully respecting them, I have

determined to give some further quotations:—

“ The convocation did little this winter, they continued their former ill practices, but little opposition was made to them, as very little regard was had to them ; they drew up a representation of some abuses in the ecclesiastical discipline, and in the consistorial courts ; but took care to mention none of those greater ones, of which many among themselves were eminently guilty, such as pluralities, non-residence, the neglect of their cures, and the irregularities in the lives of the clergy, which were too visible.”

Again, “ Learn to view Popery in a true light, as a conspiracy to exalt the power of the clergy, even by subjugating the most sacred truths in religion, to contrivances for raising their authority, and by offering to the world another method of being saved, besides that prescribed in the gospel. Popery is a mass of impostures, supported by men who manage them with great advantages, and impose them with inexpressible severities on those who dare call anything in question, that they dictate to them. I see a spirit rising among us, too like that of the Church of Rome, of advancing the clergy beyond their due authority to an unjust pitch ; this rather heightens jealousies and prejudices against us than advance our real authority.”

Again, “ I say it with great regret, I have observed the clergy in all the places through which I have travelled, Papists, Lutherans, Calvinists

and Dissenters; but of them all our clergy is much the most remiss in their labours in private, and the least severe in their lives."

Again, "All the various instruments, upon which heavy fees must be raised, were the infamous contrivances of the canonists, and can never be maintained when well examined."

Again, "But in this I am positive, that no patron answers the obligation of *that trust*, unless he is well persuaded that the clerk he presents is a truly good man, has a competent measure of knowledge, zeal, and discretion, *so suited* to the people for whom he names him, that he has reason to believe he will be a faithful pastor, and a prudent guide to them."

I now come to our own times, and I ask, can there be any wonder at the great increase of infidelity and dissent, when it is known how the bishoprics, deaneries, and rich livings, are and have been disposed of? Tomline was made Bishop of Winchester because he had been tutor to William Pitt; Bethell, Bishop of Gloucester, tutor to the Duke of Northumberland, and a host of other tutors, play writers, or translators, and noblemen's brothers, not forgetting Doctor Poynton, who has just been placed in an Irish bishopric by the "disinterested," "patriotic," "consistent reformer," Earl Grey, the emoluments from which amount to £8000 per annum for himself; and the presentation to thirty-three livings, which will afford, "in a very ingenucus way," some nice

pickings or gleanings for the Grey Family. I only hope he will not receive the emoluments and retire to the Continent, and remain there for twenty years together, as one of his predecessors, Lord Bristol, once did. Can any one wonder at the great increase of infidelity and dissent, when it is perceived that the interests of some respectable agricultural parish are sacrificed, because some gentlemanly card-playing, hunting, dancing adventurer happens to marry some poor genteel girl without one farthing of fortune, whose mother, aunt, cousin, or grandmother happened to carry some few voters down to a contested election in the interest of my Lord ——— A. D. 1807.

I ask, are British farmers to toil hard, and be tithed to the last egg or quart of milk, to support such characters? If the farmers possess common sense, they must perceive that such Church of Englandism is not Christianity, and they are apt to consider the whole Church of England scheme, as nothing but a cunning device to live in luxury and idleness at the public expense.

Can any one wonder at the great increase of infidelity and dissent, when it is told that the archbishops and bishops are wallowing in their £20,000's per annum, and many of the poor curates can scarcely get bread, and are prevented going into any trade as Paul and Peter did, because the lord parsons of England have determined that trade is vulgar. I know they pretend they do it, in order that the clergy may have more

time to attend to their spiritual avocations. I wish the bishops would look to their own precious time, consumed as it is in the House of Lords, and absent themselves from that house for ever. I feel sure the nation would not be offended by it.

I maintain that no man has a right to say to me, I will give the living of your parish to my brother; your parish shall pay him tithes, &c. amounting to £700 per annum, and your parish shall also pay a rate sufficient to keep the church in repair: but my brother shall place in the pulpit every Sunday some curate at £70 per Annum, and shall be allowed to absent himself from his duties when, and for as long a time as he shall think proper without consulting any one; you must be satisfied—you have no right to complain so long as the duty is performed according ‘*to the letter of the act of parliament.*’ I am to be told, that another man shall place over me what religious instructor he pleases, and compel me to support him! It is the law of the land that people shall live, and toil, and remain in a state of utter bondage with respect to religion, merely to provide for noblemen’s tutors, pamphleteers, and younger brothers. It is the law of the land that the Archbishop of York shall receive £60,000, as fines from the copyholders of Ripon for performing the duties of a bishop, yet charge the parish of Tadcaster in *fees* the sum of £27 for consecrating their church-yard. It is the law of the land that allows the Dean and Chapter of Ripon to lay claim to a tithe of the

milk, amounting to 5s. per annum, on each cow kept by *poor cottagers*, for the support of their families in the Borough of Ripon,—all this is law; —the law of the land; invented by priests for the benefit of priests; which law is in opposition to the law of God, and the inalienable rights of man, *and consequently not binding upon the conscience of any man*. I speak the truth from the bottom of my heart, so judge me God. I say, that such laws have been built by tyranny upon a foundation of ignorance; the parsons have been the builders, and the poor gulled “Church and State”—“No Popery people of England” have been the supporters or foundation; the cry of “Church and State” was invented by state priests, professedly to oppose “revolution,” “liberalism,” “radicalism,” “Jacobinism,” but really to support corruption, ignorance, servility, priestcraft, extortion, and tyranny.

The parsons may place me in the pillory in Cheapside; they may slit my nose; they may cut off my ears; they may brand me on the hands and face, with a red-hot iron; they may place me in the stocks of Lambeth Palace, for speaking the truth: but they cannot prove, by common sense, or the word of God, that I have not spoken the truth. I have spoken it, and I defy all the charges of all the venerable archdeacons in the world to prove it false. It is the law of the land which allows the *Reverend Francis Lundy*, rector of Lockington, near Beverley, in Yorkshire, to commit to the

House of Correction for three months, a poor farmer's servant, though true *patriot*, for refusing to pay him a tithe out of his hard-earned year's wages;—it is the law of the land, but it is equally opposed to the laws of God, and the inalienable rights of man. All laws ought to be made for the benefit of the public; the people are the foundation of all law; the laws were, or ought to have been, made for them, as they were not made for the laws, and the law-makers. Where tyranny does overcome the rights of man, it merely does it by physical strength, but not by justice or right; and what is in itself unjust will for ever so remain.

Can any one be surprised at the increase of infidelity and dissent, when he is informed that a Bill once passed the House of Commons for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, but was thrown out in the House of Lords, where *bishops*,—*Christian bishops*,—sit to support the interests of christianity? and Lord Eldon, the late lord chancellor, once declared in that house, that there could be no sin in the slave trade, as it always has received the support of the bench of bishops.

I am well aware that the clergy will cry out infidelity, atheism, church in danger, church and state, and some will even allude to profane, deistical writers, and the propagators of infidelity, from their pulpits; and some may even be at the expense of purchasing this pamphlet, in order to produce and expose the mistakes contained in it, when they have some friends to dine with them,

in order to prove that my style is bad; that I am vulgar, illiterate, &c., and to show their superior skill in criticism, as was the case with the Leeds Mercury two years ago. I care nothing about fine style; I only am ambitious of writing plain truth, in such language as an oppressed British public will be able to understand; and in order to convince the public that they are not all infidels who perceive and write upon the tyranny of priestcraft, I will give a few extracts from the *Plea for Religion*, a valuable work, written against the infidelity of Paine and others, at the time of the first French Revolution, 1799, by the Rev. David Simpson, M. A. and minister of Christ Church, Macclesfield:—"The lofty looks of lordly prelates shall be brought low; the supercilious airs of downy doctors and perjured pluralists shall be humbled; the horrible sacrilege of non-residents who shear the fleece, and leave the flock, thus despoiled, to the charge of uninterested hirclings, that care not for them, shall be avenged on their impious heads. Intemperate priests, avaricious clerks, and buckish parsons, those curses of Christendom, shall be confounded. *All secular hierarchies in the church shall be tumbled into ruin*; lukewarm formalists, of every denomination, shall call on the rocks and mountains to cover them."

Again,—“What a curse have the priests of Christendom been to Christendom! How many precious souls have been led into the pit of des-

truction by an ungodly, superstitious, and idolatrous priesthood! I was almost going to say that we parsons have been the means of damning more souls than ever we were a means of saving! From our profession it is that iniquity diffuses itself through every land! God forgive us! We have been too bad! Instead of being a blessing, and spreading health and salvation through the nations, as is the undoubted design of the gospel of Christ, and the Christian ministry, we have been playing into each other's hands, have erected a huge fabric of worldly dominion for ourselves, and have brought down, and are at this moment bringing down, the divine judgments upon every country where we have erected our standard. We Protestants will be ready enough to allow that this has been the case in the Catholic states; but it is also true, if I mistake not, of the Protestant bishops and clergy. We will not sacrifice one inch of the secular dominion we have, *through the weakness and folly of men*, obtained,—no, not to save the kingdom from destruction.”

Again, “To many well-informed persons, it seems extremely questionable whether the religion of Jesus Christ admits of any civil establishment at all. They rather suppose it is inconsistent with the very nature of it, and that it was never designed to be incorporated with any secular institution whatever. Certain it is that it made its way, at first, not only without human aid, but even in opposition to all laws, both civil and

religious, which then prevailed in the Roman empire. This was the state of it for upwards of three hundred years. It seems, too, to be the intention of divine providence to reduce it again to the same simple and unconnected state. America hath set the example ; France, Italy, Holland and Switzerland are going the same way ; and it is highly probable that all the other states in Europe will follow the same steps. As things now are in this country, the religion of Jesus Christ, which was not only “not to be of this world,” but in direct opposition to it, is certainly in a great degree, a temporal, worldly, civil institution. At least, it is a strange mixture of things secular and religious. It is nearly as much so as it is in the Catholic countries.

Again, “ Then as to the titles by which they are designated ; they appear to carry the most indisputable marks of the anti-christian apostacy. His Grace the Most Reverend Father in God, William, by Divine Providence, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury ! The Right Reverend Father in God, John, by Divine permission Lord Bishop of London ! What is there in the titles of the Pope of Rome more magnificent than the sound of these words ? ”

I now proceed to that masterpiece of sacerdotal humbug, the very key-stone on which the arch of ignorance, superstition and tyranny was for ever to hang,—the coronation oath ; which was fabricated in the darkest ages of Popery. I consider

the fabrication and administration of that oath to be an insult to the people, and a degradation to the sovereign. The king of England is called by the unanimous consent of his people to undertake the reins of government, but before he can legally assume all the powers of government, the state parsons step forward and present an oath for him to take on the day of his coronation, to the effect that he shall be master of all his subjects but themselves; he shall be king of the Quakers, Methodists, Unitarians, Baptists, Independents, and the followers of Joanna Southcote; in short, he may be king of every body and every thing, but the property of the Church of England; but that he must not touch, *as that is sacred property!* The more I think of this oath, the more I am disgusted with the damnable hellish *state* policy of the Church of England. I have remarked through life that mean, grasping, unprincipled characters always overreach themselves, and so have the contrivers of the coronation oath. At the time the coronation oath was made, the great body of the people considered the Church of England the church of God, and as the priests either were so ignorant as to suppose the same, or through policy pretended to believe the same, (calculating that the people would always be involved in the same ignorance,) they worded the coronation oath so securely, as they thought, by making the whole rest upon the *law of God*, which I have always been taught to consider the

New Testament. His Majesty William IV. has sworn to do justice to the Church of England according to the law of God ; and may the God of heaven preserve his Majesty's health till he has fulfilled that oath.

I can almost fancy that I hear a certain pious zealous bishop (Philpotts) a great advocate for the keeping the coronation oath, observe that his Majesty is not only bound by the laws of God, but also the *laws, customs, and franchises granted to the clergy by the glorious King Saint Edward, his predecessor*. So, because the glorious Saint Edward chose to grant certain privileges to the state parsons in his day, all the kings of England are obliged to take oath that they never will alter any of those privileges ; and if any king should hesitate to take this oath, what would the consequence be ? that every occupier of every pulpit in every parish church in the kingdom, would be persuading his congregation on the Sunday morning, that their religion was in danger, and that their king was a Papist, and therefore unfit to rule over them.

It appears, then, that the law of God has not sufficient power to govern the church of God in Great Britain, without the *laws, customs, and franchises of the glorious Saint Edward*.

I certainly consider this rather a strange partnership, and as partners have often very unequal shares in a business, I should almost be inclined to think that Saint Edward the Glorious was the

first or principal partner, who took under his especial care and management the tutors and younger brothers, with their “ingenuous provisions” of £20,000 per annum, while the great author and founder of all religion merely had the care of the persecuted, oppressed, despised, half-famished curates. It appears that his Majesty swears to obey two masters,—the great founder and governor of the universe, and the glorious Saint Edward; and each of these masters has a separate code of laws, which laws must either agree or differ; now if they should at any time be opposed to each other, which master is our gracious King William IV. to obey? God and the New Testament, or the great and glorious Saint Edward, that king of parsons? I have not got in my possession the trumpery lumbers of the glorious Saint Edward, but I doubt not but they may be found carefully hoarded up in Lambeth Palace. I have the law of God in my possession, and in that law I never yet met with the great and glorious Saint Edward, his customs, privileges, and franchises. I have searched the law of God, and I have found in Matthew vi, 24.—“That no man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other; he cannot serve God and Mammon.” Therefore, I conclude that the mummery about the franchises of the glorious Saint Edward are not worth one farthing; and I

consider that mummerly nothing but paltry trash forged by parsons to oppress the people.

In the days of our Saviour, the Pharisees, who had some glorious Saint Edward or other, who had appointed laws contrary to the laws of God, came to Jesus, the great founder of our religion, and said unto him, "Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders? and Jesus answered them, Why do ye also transgress the commandments of God by your tradition?" This last question shows that all traditions are merely the inventions of priests, and not to be placed in comparison or competition with the law of God.

The law of God, which the reforming king William has sworn to observe and keep, with respect to his government of the church of God in his dominions, declares, in the very words of Jesus Christ to his apostles:—"Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." I call upon his Majesty and his reforming ministers, as they value the solemn oath which his Majesty has taken, to deprive the bishops of all their pompous, silly, empty titles, and remove them, during his reign, from the House of Lords. I also call upon his Majesty and his reforming ministers to equalize all church livings, either of the *dignified or undignified* clergy residing within his dominions.